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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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Q. Do you not fear that the additional capability of the F-15's for Saudi Arabia and the provision of AWACS to that country greatly affect the arms balance in that part of the world? Are we not forcing Israel to request additional arms or sophisticated equipment such as satellite capability? And does this not in turn force some type of response from the Soviets?

A. In recent years there have been profound changes in the Middle East that affect U.S. national interests and which create greater threats to the security of Saudi Arabia. Among these changes were the fall of the Shah, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the use of air power to destroy vital petroleum facilities in the Iran/Iraq war. The purpose of the proposed sale of F-15 items and AWACS is to enable Saudi Arabia to better defend its vital natural resources and other facilities.

We recognize that Saudi acquisition of these systems is of great concern to Israel. A central aspect of U.S. policy since the October 1973 war has been to ensure that Israel maintains a qualitative military edge. This Administration will ensure that Israel's defenses remain strong under any circumstances. We have and will take all steps necessary to ensure a favorable balance in this regard.

I do not believe that the proposed sale to Saudi Arabia would require an Israeli response which would stimulate a regional arms race.

The Soviet presence and threat in the Middle East have grown steadily in recent years. We do not believe that this proposed sale will affect these continuing Soviet efforts to improve their military capabilities in the region. These

Soviet efforts have been driven by their desire to establish greater leverage over the region and its resources, and not by our arms sales to our friends in the region.